1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1

wielded by the Shi'i mujtahids—doctors of the law—was formidable not only in 'Iraq but throughout Persia, where their word was always important, sometimes decisive, in the highest decisions of State. These divines, nearly all Persian by nationality, with their considerable wealth, their adulation by the simple, their concourse of pupils and followers—the more, since theological students were exempt from conscription—formed the nucleus of an unassimilable element in 'Iraq society and politics: anti-Sunni, anti-Turkish, anti-progressive, all-powerful over the Euphrates tribes, they could be neither placated nor ignored. Meanwhile the violent local politics of these towns were controlled by 'town Shaykhs' by no means holy, and by street gangs among which the famous Zugurd and Shumurd of Najf were notorious.

Although no region or social stratum in the territory was without its acquaintance with religion, its civilized and traditional social observances, and its lively imitative intelligence, yet manifestations of an intellectual or cultural life were rare. The general level of information regarding the world, past or present, and that of æsthetic appreciation, was low even among the literate classes of the towns; in the tribes, ignorance was profound. The arts were represented by a narrow range of traditional music, a few remembered Arab songs, the modern verses of two or three respected poets, geometrical decoration in brickwork, and the humblest of handicrafts. Disinterested learning could be found in rare scholars of the minority communities (such as Father Anastase the Carmelite), and among members of the upper-class families—Basha'yans, Alusis, Gaylanis, 'Umaris—who maintained domestic libraries and composed histories of their town or family. Of publishing, book production, or generally readable literary output there was nothing save the dull official newspaper. Archaeological excavation, 'Iraq's greatest claim to learned interest at the time, was to 'Iraqis an ignored or suspect mystery. The professional classes—lawyers, doctors, military officers—had acquired from Turkish sources a modicum of specialized knowledge reaching no standard admissible in Europe; in other branches of applied knowledge—agriculture, engineering, economics—there was nothing or almost nothing to show. Theology and ecclesiastical history stood in a class apart; in the Sunni 'religious' families it represented a body of authentic learning, in a field limited by its narrow tradition and the rejection of originality; in Shi'ism, and above all at the Holy Cities, these studies were synonymous with learning itself (since no others existed) and almost with virtue. Pursued for a lifetime of memorizing and arid pedantry, and attracting hundreds of pale disciples destined for lives of sheltered and endowed religion, this medieval learning of Shi'i dogma and tradition formed the

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1

power station at Baghdad was the property of a British company, that of Baṣra belonged to the Port, while Kirkuk was supplied with current by its all-providing oil company.

The revised labour legislation of 1942, the activity of the Ministry of Social Affairs, interest in International Labour Office literature and standards, and the employment since 1949 of a British expert on labour questions were guarantees that, though part of the Code was not applied, progress was real towards an effective interest in urban labour conditions and safeguards; it extended to trade union organization, the establishment of Labour Exchanges, housing schemes and welfare, and plans for social security whose realization was delayed only by their high cost. Meanwhile limited welfare facilities—dispensaries, canteens, clubs, sports grounds—were offered voluntarily by a few employers such as the Port, the Railways, and the more considerable industrial companies. They were provided on a much larger scale, and as part of a comprehensive organization, by the oil companies.

In domestic living standards, if it was true that the modernization and Westernization of the urban middle and lower-middle classes still left 'the poor' little better provided in their own homes than fifty years earlier, yet the proportion of households able to rise above their old deficiencies had much increased, and the private life of the middle as of the upper classes showed that in their domestic equipment and housing, hygiene, clothes, and range of interests great changes had been somehow effected in the last two generations. In men's and women's clothing, in the appearance and conduct of households, the serving of meals, and more generally in family and social life, Western ways had gained much ground. Resistance to the emancipation of women was now narrowing; the Muslim veil was frequently discarded; women learned and taught, entered the professions of medicine and law, followed politics (including Communism), took part in social work, and through their Women's Society were heard to demand the franchise. Circles, however, where women were strictly secluded were still considerable, and included the households of many leading notables and the royal family itself.

Social life was diversified by increased visiting between families, by the cinematograph, by cabarets of both Oriental and Western type, by casinos and modernized cafés. The traditional coffee shop kept its place for the male members of all classes and, within the social grade for which each catered, was still the club and business centre of thousands. Club life had developed to include the exclusive social clubs of the rich, the middle-class professional clubs of the lawyers, Army officers, and officials of various branches of Government, and a dozen sporting clubs; but the

7: International Bank N, S-4 (1951) 1952 MH1 Iraq MH1

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found to be entirely preoccupied with the classical and literary tradition. It is true that the Arab mind has a flair for language and literature and delights in oral self-expression, and young children learn to read and write quickly and speak with a fluency and feeling for words which children of other lands would find difficult to emulate. But with the increased importance of science and technology and the need of improving productive efficiency in industry, agriculture and other occupations, the people of Iraq cannot afford to remain content with a system of education which does not equip the younger generation to play its part in the projected plans of development.

Once educational authorities clearly recognize that the introduction of activity-centered methods and curricula and of craft work is basic to the whole idea of educational reconstruction, it should not be difficult to work out the necessary measures. In many other countries, such a reorientation of education has been actually achieved, and not only detailed theoretical discussion but records of concrete, practically worked-out schemes are available for consultation and guidance. It will, of course, not be possible—and even if it were possible, it would not be desirable—to copy these methods and schemes mechanically, because education is a creative field in which ideas have to be applied to the particular situation in which one is working. It will be necessary for Iraqi educators to work out their own pattern of "activity schools" and their appropriate forms of craft work. In fact, some gifted educators have already envisaged this problem in its true perspective. Dr. Matta Akrawi's thesis on *Curriculum Construction in the Public Primary Schools of Iraq* (published in 1942) is an effective presentation of the case for reorganized methods and curricula breaking with the narrow academic tradition. What is more, it gives concrete instances of how units in social studies and health education can be worked out in such a way as to break down the barriers between schooling and life.

What kind of crafts can be introduced in the village and city schools which will appeal to the children and will also be related to their environment so that they can leave school with trained skill and aptitudes and participate effectively in the work of their communities? The answer to this question can be given only after